CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

RAILROADS

RAIL GRADE SEPARATION GUIDELINES

ROADWAY POLICY TWO

POLICY STATEMENT:

Any project programmed in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) which may result in creating a new highway-railroad crossing shall be discussed with the railroad in the early planning (scoping) process. The Rail Division will be notified of all scoping meetings held by the Project Development and Environmental Analysis Branch. Any Secondary Road, Industrial Access, Small Urban or High Hazard-Safety projects that may result in the creation of a new crossing will also be coordinated with the Rail Division early in the planning process. The Rail Division will be informed of these projects by the Assistant Secretary for Secondary Roads and Economic Development or the appropriate Division Engineer for informational purposes only.

When new highway-railroad crossings are proposed by the Department, the State Highway Administrator will coordinate proposal reviews with the Rail Division and appropriate railroad. It will be the responsibility of the Rail Division to gather data on the number of trains per day and to make recommendations to the State Highway Administrator relative to the potential crossing.

The Board of Transportation (BOT) sets forth the following criteria to serve as guidelines, within the limits outlined below, in the treatment of highway-railroad intersections on new construction projects. These are general guides to establish the desirable conditions for highway-railroad grade separations, but must be implemented with sound engineering judgment, reasonableness, and attention to costs.

The grade separation guidelines are based on use of an exposure index which is the product of the number of trains per day and the projected average daily highway traffic at the end of the design period. Unless information to the contrary is available, such as a pending abandonment of the railroad, the number of trains at the end of the design period should be assumed to be the same as at present.

Separations should be constructed in RURAL areas when the exposure index is 15,000 or more.

Separations should be constructed in URBAN areas when the exposure index is 30,000 or more.

Where two alignments are under consideration and one would make separation feasible, the separation should be considered as one factor favoring adoption of such alignment. It is realized that topography, right-of-way costs, construction costs or other features of the physical situation may make separation impractical even though the index is above the figure set. In this case, the Secretary of the Department of Transportation shall have final authority in decisions to create new at-grade crossings.

It is the policy of the Department of Transportation to permit no net increase in the number of at-grade crossings on the railroad segments having a high volume of train traffic. CSX Transportation's route from Pleasant Hill to Rowland and Norfolk Southern Railway's routes from Pelham to Grover and Pineville are high volume segments.

The railroad will be notified of all final decisions regarding the locations of new at-grade crossings or grade separations. In addition, a coordinating committee consisting of representatives of the Department and the railroads will meet periodically to discuss upcoming projects that involve both the railroad and highway systems.

BACKGROUND:

Planning Board Approval 1/24/66
General Update, 4/15/98
General update, 4/16/01

PURPOSE:

This policy provides criteria to serve as guidelines in the treatment of railroad intersections on new construction which includes new railroad spurs and industrial access roads.

RESPONSIBILITY AND PROCEDURES:

When a proposed railway-highway crossing exceeds the exposure index warrant required for a separation, more in-depth studies shall be jointly made with Structure Design, Traffic Engineering, Right of Way, and Project Development and Environmental Analysis Branch. The Project Engineer shall coordinate these activities if an active project is involved.